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Letter dated 7 October 2013 from the Secretary-General addressed to the President of the Security Council

On 27 September 2013, the Security Council took a historic decision, in the form of its resolution 2118 (2013), calling for the expeditious destruction of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. The resolution was preceded by a decision earlier that day by the Executive Council of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) (EC-M-33.DEC.1), which established strict deadlines for the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons material and equipment.

The Council, in paragraph 8 of resolution 2118 (2013), requested that I submit to it, in consultation with the Director-General of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, recommendations regarding the role of the United Nations in eliminating the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. Since the adoption of resolution 2118 (2013), I have been in close contact with Director-General Ahmet Üzümcü, and staff members of our organizations have been working intensely and in a spirit of collaboration, in order to develop the requested recommendations, and to plan for the implementation of the resolution and the decision of the OPCW Executive Council (EC-M-33.DEC.1).

Based on these consultations, and with the support of the Director-General of OPCW, I wish to present a proposal for a Joint Mission of OPCW and the United Nations to implement our respective roles and responsibilities pursuant to resolution 2118 (2013).

The Council is acutely aware of the suffering of the Syrian people as a result of the violent conflict that has ravaged their country for more than two-and-a-half years: more than 100,000 people have died; many more have been injured and detained; one third of the population has been displaced or is otherwise in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 2 million people who are living as refugees in neighbouring countries. The conflict continues, with daily violence and civilian deaths and untold suffering for millions, while the population yearns for peace.

On top of this carnage, the world was shocked to see images of Syrian civilians, including many children, who appeared to have been the victims of a gruesome chemical weapons attack. On 16 September 2013, I reported the results of the investigation by the United Nations Mission to Investigate Allegations of the

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Use of Chemical Weapons in the Syrian Arab Republic of the incident that took place on 21 August 2013 in the Ghouta area of Damascus. The investigation concluded that chemical weapons were used on a relatively large scale, in the context of the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic. As you know, I have consistently condemned the use of chemical weapons by anyone under any circumstances. The Mission, which I established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 42/37 C (1987) of 30 November 1987, returned to the Syrian Arab Republic from 25 to 30 September 2013, in order to complete its investigation of the pending credible allegations with a view to preparing its final report.

The death of any civilian from armed conflict is tragic. The deaths from the chemical weapons attack in Ghouta on 21 August were especially disturbing because they were caused by weapons that the world first sought to ban 88 years ago. That attack, and those horrible deaths, showed that we still have more work to do to rid the world of these terrible weapons, and highlighted the continued importance of the role of OPCW.

The attack also served as an impetus to diplomatic efforts to find a way to eliminate the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic. Those efforts produced the Framework for Elimination of Syrian Chemical Weapons dated 14 September 2013, agreed upon between the Russian Federation and the United States of America in Geneva. On the same day, the Syrian Arab Republic deposited with me its instruments of accession to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (Chemical Weapons Convention), and declared that it will comply with its stipulations and observe them faithfully and sincerely, applying the Convention provisionally pending its entry into force in the Syrian Arab Republic. I welcome the Syrian Government's important decision.

The Council, in resolution 2118 (2013), paragraph 8, authorized the deployment of an advance team of United Nations personnel to provide early assistance to OPCW activities in the Syrian Arab Republic. On 1 October 2013, four days after the adoption of the resolution, a joint advance team of 19 OPCW personnel and 16 United Nations personnel arrived in Damascus to initiate their activities pursuant to the decision of the OPCW Executive Council and the resolution of the Security Council. The United Nations team is composed primarily of logistics and security personnel, as well as a doctor and interpreters. The rapid deployment of the OPCW/United Nations joint advance team was made possible through the close collaboration of the two Organizations, as well as the cooperation of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic.

The environment in which the OPCW/United Nations joint advance team will operate is dangerous and volatile, particularly in urban areas such as Damascus, Homs and Aleppo. Heavy artillery, air strikes, mortar barrages and the indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas are commonplace, and battle lines shift quickly. Two mortars impacted in close proximity of the hotel in Damascus where the advance team will initially base its operations just hours before it arrived, while vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices have detonated in close proximity.

Since the deployment of the OPCW/United Nations joint advance team in Damascus, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has submitted supplementary information related to, inter alia, the type and location of Syria's chemical weapons, and storage, production, mixing and filling facilities. On

2 October, OPCW received further information requested by it subsequent to the initial disclosure submitted on 19 September 2013, and worked with government experts to further clarify it by 4 October 2013. United Nations personnel within the joint advance team have worked to establish an initial operating capability, and conduct logistics and security assessments in preparation for field visits.

Yesterday, the first verification visit took place. Under the supervision of OPCW experts, supported by the United Nations, the Syrian Arab Republic began to destroy its chemical weapons. Syrian personnel used cutting torches and angle grinders to destroy or disable a range of materials, including missile warheads, aerial bombs and mixing and filling equipment. I welcome this historic step, and urge all parties to do their part to ensure that this encouraging progress is maintained and indeed accelerated.

In order to achieve the timely elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme in the safest and most secure manner possible, pursuant to the provisions of the OPCW Executive Council decision (EC-M-33.DEC.1) and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013), and following close consultations with the OPCW Director-General, I propose the establishment of an OPCW/United Nations Joint Mission to eliminate the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic.

Within the Joint Mission, the United Nations and OPCW will operate in areas of their particular competencies, taking into account the necessary and complementary roles that each organization has in supporting and conducting the Mission. The United Nations will provide support to overall coordination and liaison with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic and opposition groups, security arrangements, logistics, information assessments, communications and outreach, and administration. The United Nations will also engage, in its areas of responsibilities, with international and regional actors , as well as the Security Council and other stakeholders, in furtherance of the implementation of resolution 2118 (2013) and related resolutions of the Security Council.

Owing to the specialist nature of the Joint Mission and stringent timelines that have been put in place for the elimination of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic, the role of the United Nations in facilitating strong support and assistance from Member States is also necessary. While OPCW will serve as the lead technical agency, the United Nations is willing to play a strategic coordination role and serve as an operational enabler for the Mission.

In accordance with the OPCW Executive Council decision, OPCW will engage with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic for the purposes of verifying chemical weapons and facilities related to chemical weapons storage and production, including mixing and filling, and chemical weapons research and development. OPCW will also conduct inspections pursuant to the OPCW Executive Council decision, and other activities related to the verification of the destruction of the Syrian chemical weapons programme.

The Joint Mission will be headed by a civilian Special Coordinator, whom I would appoint in close consultation with the Director-General of OPCW, at the level of Under-Secretary-General. The Special Coordinator would report to the Director-General and myself, provide the overall coordination of the Joint Mission, and liaise

and coordinate with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic, opposition groups and the international community, as this relates to the mandate of the Joint Mission.

Given the operating environment, the Joint Mission will establish a "light footprint" in the Syrian Arab Republic, deploying to Syria only those personnel whose presence is necessary in the country to perform their tasks. Deployments by the United Nations to Syria for the Joint Mission will primarily be in the area of logistics, security and liaison, with limited numbers for support to the Special Coordinator, medical support, communications, administrative support and possibly other areas, as may be required. The Damascus office will thus serve as an operations base for the Joint Mission.

The Joint Mission will establish a staging area and support base in Cyprus. I thank the Government of Cyprus for its willingness to host such a facility for the Joint Mission, subject to a decision by the Council on the establishment of the Mission. Teams travelling to the Syrian Arab Republic to conduct inspection visits and other activities could first gather at the support base to plan their missions. The base would also serve as a training centre for Mission personnel who, depending on their role, may have a need for some combination of technical training and special security training. For those Mission personnel who will be operating in a chemical weapons environment, OPCW will provide chemical safety training. The base would further serve as a storage location for logistics and operational equipment for the Joint Mission, as well as a back office, providing human resource, finance, administrative and other support services.

The Joint Mission will build upon the advance team deployment and expand to a staff of approximately 100 personnel from both OPCW and the United Nations. However, owing to the expected nature of the responsibilities of the Joint Mission, the number of OPCW and United Nations personnel within the Joint Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic, or providing direct support to it, will be constantly shifting, depending on operational requirements. Furthermore, as the Executive Council decision (EC-M-33.DEC.1) anticipates the complete elimination of Syrian chemical weapons material and equipment by the first half of 2014, the planned deployments of Joint Mission personnel will need to be for less than one year. Given the unique nature of the responsibilities, the operating environment of the Joint Mission, and the timelines associated with its work, I intend to make maximum use of the authority provided to me, including in the area of human resources, in order to promote the timely achievement of the mandate of the Mission in a manner that will maximize the safety and security of the Joint Mission personnel.

While maintaining seamless cooperation between OPCW and the United Nations, each organization will fund its own personnel, responsibilities and tasks. OPCW will remain responsible for all direct costs of its personnel and technical services and equipment supporting efforts in the Syrian Arab Republic, including movements to and from the Mission area. Aside from supporting its own activities under the new mandate, the United Nations will provide logistics support, communications, administrative services and coordination of security arrangements and other operational support for the OPCW team deployed to the Joint Mission, including movements within the Mission area. The United Nations contribution to the Joint Mission will primarily be funded from the regular budget. However, I also intend to establish a trust fund to provide for activities that will complement the efforts mandated of the Joint Mission as requirements continue to emerge. I have

consulted with the Director-General of OPCW, who intends to launch a separate but complementary trust fund to assist with the financing of OPCW activities. We will continue our close coordination to ensure that there is no overlap between the activities to be financed from the two trust funds.

In the context of resolution 2118 (2013), my two highest priorities are the elimination of the Syrian chemical weapons programme, and the safety and security of the Joint Mission personnel who have volunteered to perform this vital but dangerous task. I thus intend to put in place all appropriate precautions, including in the areas of medical and casualty evacuation, and to make the necessary investments in training and equipment, in order to provide the highest possible level of safety and security for Joint Mission personnel. In this context, I note that OPCW and the United Nations concluded a memorandum of understanding on the coordination of security in August 2011; as such, OPCW personnel will operate under the United Nations security management system. Having reached agreement on the terms of our cooperation in the implementation of the Executive Council decision and the Security Council resolution, the Director-General and I will conclude a Supplementary Arrangement pursuant to the Relationship Agreement between the United Nations and the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons concluded in 2001. We also intend to conclude a tripartite status-of-mission agreement with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic as soon as possible.

The Joint Mission will work to accomplish its objectives in three phases. In phase I, the Joint Mission will establish an initial presence in Damascus and develop an initial operating capability. During this phase, OPCW will conduct initial verification activities, notably through dialogue with the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to clarify the initial Syrian declarations to OPCW. The Joint Mission will also conduct planning for site visits and verification activities, and for future phases. The joint advance team has already initiated some of these activities, as required by the Executive Council decision (EC-M-33.DEC.1) and Security Council resolution 2118 (2013). The OPCW team, supported by the United Nations team, will begin its initial inspection of chemical weapons production facilities as part of this phase. I have established an interdepartmental team at United Nations Headquarters to provide support to the advance team, and have allocated $2 million from the provision available to me for unforeseen and extraordinary expenditure to fund the initial activities of the United Nations pursuant to resolution 2118 (2013). To date, the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic has fully cooperated in supporting the work of the advance team.

During phase II, through 1 November 2013, OPCW must complete its initial inspections of all Syrian chemical weapons production and storage facilities, and oversee the destruction by the Syrian Arab Republic of all chemical weapons production and mixing and filling equipment. To achieve that end, the Joint Mission will further develop its operational capabilities, including through the opening and development of the support base in Cyprus. It will enhance its medical response capabilities, strengthen its security posture, including through the deployment of armoured vehicles, and develop its specialized training programme. The Director-General will lead consultations with States parties, especially in areas related to destruction in phase III. I will also conduct consultations with Member States, especially in areas related to the operational and security dimensions of the verification activities in that phase, as well as the possible public health and

environmental impact of the work of the Joint Mission. The Director-General and I will coordinate our efforts with the assistance of the Special Coordinator.

The time frame for the activities planned for phase II, especially those related to the destruction of chemical weapons production and mixing and filling equipment, is very short, especially given the complexity of the work and the armed conflict taking place. During this phase, the Joint Mission will rely on the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic to fulfil its obligation to ensure the safety and security of the Joint Mission and its personnel.

Phase III will be the most difficult and challenging phase. From 1 November 2013 to 30 June 2014, a period of eight months, the Joint Mission will be expected to support, monitor and verify the destruction of a complex chemical weapons programme involving multiple sites spread over a country engulfed in violent conflict, which includes approximately 1,000 metric tons of chemical weapons, agents and precursors that are dangerous to handle, dangerous to transport and dangerous to destroy. This will require movement, by OPCW and United Nations civilian personnel, across active confrontation lines and in some cases through territory controlled by armed groups that are hostile to the objectives of the Joint Mission. There will be complicated technical questions related to the destruction. There will be significant operational and logistic challenges related to the transport of specialized equipment and the personnel to operate it, as well as perhaps to the movement of highly dangerous weapons and materials. There will be exceedingly complex security challenges related to ensuring a safe operating environment at destruction sites for the length of time needed to conduct the activities of the Joint Mission. The timelines associated with this destruction phase would be ambitious under the most peaceful and benign of circumstances. In the extant circumstances, the pressures associated with the destruction timelines will not only enhance operational and security risks, but also potential public health and environmental risks. During phase III, the OPCW/United Nations Joint Mission will seek to conduct an operation the likes of which, quite simply, has never been tried before.

Given the complex nature of phase III, additional analysis and consultation is required, involving OPCW, the United Nations and Member States that may be in a position to contribute to the associated activities, in order to develop a viable operational concept and conduct the necessary planning. As with phase II, all destruction of chemical weapons facilities, stocks and associated material is the responsibility of the Government of the Syrian Arab Republic. Neither OPCW nor the United Nations is mandated to conduct actual destruction activities. Given the complexities of destruction in phase III, it is highly probable that assistance by other Member States will be required in the areas of the provision of both technical and operational advice, support and equipment, as well as security and possibly other areas, in order to successfully complete the destruction and/or removal activities within the allotted time. The OPCW Director-General and I will consult with each other, and with Member States, including the Syrian Arab Republic, in our respective areas of responsibility on the planning for this phase and on its implementation. I will report back to the Council, in accordance with resolution 2118 (2013), paragraph 12, including on the outcome of these consultations.

I am very mindful of the potential public health and environmental risks that may arise from the destruction of chemical weapons and related material. I have consulted with the Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), in

accordance with paragraph 8 of resolution 2118 (2013) and she has assured me of her willingness to provide advice and guidance on public health issues that may arise from planned destruction activities. Further consultation with WHO will be conducted, especially in the context of planning for phase III. I will also consult with the Director-General of OPCW, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme and Member States with relevant expertise, as appropriate, on the potential environmental aspects related to destruction to seek to ensure that the destruction of Syrian chemical weapons does not put the Syrian people and environment at risk.

The United Nations will do its utmost to contribute to the successful implementation of resolution 2118 (2013), and to fulfil any other responsibilities the Council may assign to it related to the elimination of Syrian chemical weapons. However, the abilities of the Organization are limited, and the success of these efforts will depend on many factors beyond just the hard work of dedicated officials from the United Nations and their colleagues in OPCW. First and foremost, success will depend on the sustained commitment by the Syrian authorities to fulfil their obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention, the decisions of the OPCW Executive Council and the resolutions of the Security Council. Without sustained, genuine commitment by the Syrian authorities, the Joint Mission will fail in its objectives. Such commitment must manifest itself through full cooperation by Syrian civil and military authorities with the Joint Mission, including, inter alia, the nature of cooperation described in paragraph 7 of resolution 2118 (2013), and in particular the provision for immediate and unfettered access to sites and personnel.

The continued support of the Security Council, the OPCW Executive Council and key stakeholders is also essential to the success of the Joint Mission. The role of Member States will be critical. I call upon Member States to offer their full support to the work of the Joint Mission, including through the provision of financial, material, technical and operational assistance. I also call on Member States with influence over parties to the ongoing conflict in the Syrian Arab Republic to use that influence to promote the success of the Mission, and in particular to urge parties to ensure the safety, the security and the exclusively international character of the Mission and its personnel.

Success will also depend on a close partnership between OPCW and the United Nations as we conduct the first Joint Mission in our organizations' histories. Based on my consultations with the Director-General of OPCW thus far, and the manner in which our teams have conducted their initial operations, I am confident that the kind of partnership necessary for success is already being established. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to Director-General Üzümcü for his leadership, and to the OPCW Executive Council for the decisive manner in which it has conducted itself during this momentous time in the history of OPCW.

Prevailing public perceptions in the Syrian Arab Republic could be another critical factor for success. The Joint Mission will need to be adequately equipped to communicate effectively, aiming to inform the Syrian public, manage expectations and promote understanding of its objectives, activities and limitations locally, regionally and internationally.

The Syrian people have endured extreme suffering and unrelenting violence throughout this crisis. It should be understood by all concerned that the mandate of the Joint Mission is a distinct and unique opportunity to work together — OPCW,

the United Nations and all interested Member States — to ensure that the Syrian chemical weapons programme is eliminated as soon as possible. This will support the achievement of mutually reinforcing goals of peace and security for the Syrian population.

At the same time, I am fully aware that the destruction of the chemical weapons programme of the Syrian Arab Republic alone will not bring an end to the appalling suffering inflicted on the Syrian people. The only way to bring peace back to this country and to its people is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process. I have emphasized time and again that there can be no military solution to the problems of Syria. The continued pursuit of a military solution will lead to further destruction of the country's rich history and intricate social mosaic. In this respect, I welcomed the endorsement of the Security Council, in resolution 2118 (2013), of the Geneva Communiqué of 30 June 2012, which provides a framework for a political solution, as well as the subsequent adoption, on 2 October 2013, of a presidential statement on the humanitarian situation in Syria (S/PRST/2013/15).

In parallel to the political process, United Nations humanitarian agencies and non-governmental organizations are working tirelessly and selflessly to address the dire humanitarian needs of the Syrian people, inside the Syrian Arab Republic and in neighbouring countries. The work of the OPCW/United Nations Joint Mission will be entirely separate from the ongoing but unrelated humanitarian and political work.

As Secretary-General, I am pained to see the sustained suffering of the Syrian people. It is for the sake of the Syrian people, despite the very high risks to the United Nations, OPCW and their personnel, and despite the knowledge that the Joint Mission will not end the bloodshed or the suffering, that the United Nations willingly takes on this added responsibility. It is in the service of the Syrian people, and the service of their neighbours in the region, that we seek to rid the Syrian Arab Republic of these awful weapons, and remove the ever-present horror and risk that they pose. The world first sought to ban chemical weapons in 1925. Today the world has an opportunity to take an important step in that direction.

I should be grateful if you would bring the present letter urgently to the attention of the Security Council.